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THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

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by *Judd Walton*



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Responding to a request by ATOE President Judd Walton, this article is the contribution of John J. McAuliffe, Chairman of the Potomac Valley Chapter.

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A YEAR AGO I had never even heard of the ATOE, although I have been interested in the theatre organ in a frustrated kind of way for something like thirty years.

A vague reference to the ATOE in one of the organ journals led me to write a letter of inquiry which was returned to me marked "Addressee Unknown". My own organ teacher knew nothing about the organization. It was not until last fall, when I took a trip up to the Wurlitzer plant in North Tonawanda for the purpose of obtaining some first-hand information on the development of the theatre organ from Mr. Farny Wurlitzer himself, that I actually pinpointed the existence of the ATOE.

And it was from the ATOE headquarters, almost 3000 miles from where I live, that I learned that there was an ATOE-chapter right in my own City!

Our Chapter recently had a program on an organ that was in a Washington theatre back in the twenties. The man who was invited to play for us was the one who had played that same organ more than thirty years ago. He is still an active organist and teacher--but he had never heard of the ATOE.

I cite these instances as examples of the appalling lack of communication that exists among people who are interested in the same activities. This condition seems to prevail even in the most highly organized professions, such as medicine, education and technology. It is not, of course, that there is no communication--obviously, there is a great deal of it--but that either there is still not enough of it or it is not effectively directed to the places where it is needed or can produce results.

ATOE members have an excellent means in THEATRE ORGAN and in their chapter meetings for keeping in touch with their fellow enthusiasts--those who already know about the organization--many of whom probably learned of it by chance, as I did--but what about the other hundreds or even thousands of people who would like to know more about the theatre organ or become active members of the Association?

I believe that every theatre organ fan should talk about his favorite subject to as many people as he can. Most people display considerable interest, and I have yet to find anyone bored by the subject. He should try to get them to listen to theatre organ recordings, and wherever possible, show them a theatre organ and play or have it played for them.

Members who write for THEATRE ORGAN should try to place articles in the newspapers and popular magazines, and efforts should be made to get local staff writers to do articles on various aspects of the theatre organ story.

The more people who are aware of the existence of the ATOE and of the intense enthusiasm of those who belong to it, the greater the number of potential members. The more people we have showing an interest in the theatre organ, the more chances there are of having live organ music in some theatres again. The old days will never come back, but surely something can be done to bring about the use of a certain number of the instruments still remaining in theatres to let the public of today hear--many for the first time--the fascinating kind of music that every movie-goer a generation and more ago took for granted with the purchase of his ticket.

Response to our recent mailing of THEATRE ORGAN to all past members has NOT been encouraging! As a matter of fact, about 150 members for the 1959 year have not renewed their dues!! Membership to date stands at approximately 650, a long way from our quota of 1000. It is imperative that we reach this goal if we are to meet our budget requirements for the year. Every A.T.O.E. member is urged to sign up a new member NOW --- A.T.O.E.'s future depends upon you to assist! Remember, we MUST reach our quota of 1000 members. Will you help?